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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses plays and companion art pieces suitable for use in the United States history classroom. After a poster from a production of Max Frisch's "Biedermann und die Brandstifter," the paper presents a list of 18 questions ("lenses") for the study of plays with a historical connection; a list of 15 plays for in-depth consideration along with companion art pieces; an abbreviated commentary of the 15 plays and art pieces; a catalog of 109 other plays appropriate and viable for the history classroom; suggestions, themes, and thoughts about 3 particular plays ("The Tenth Man," "Day of Absence," and "Wetback Run") for use in a United States history classroom; and an account of a night at the theatre in 1876. (RS)

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Rupturing the Codes: The Use of Drama and Dramatic Literature in the History Classroom

By John D. Leistler

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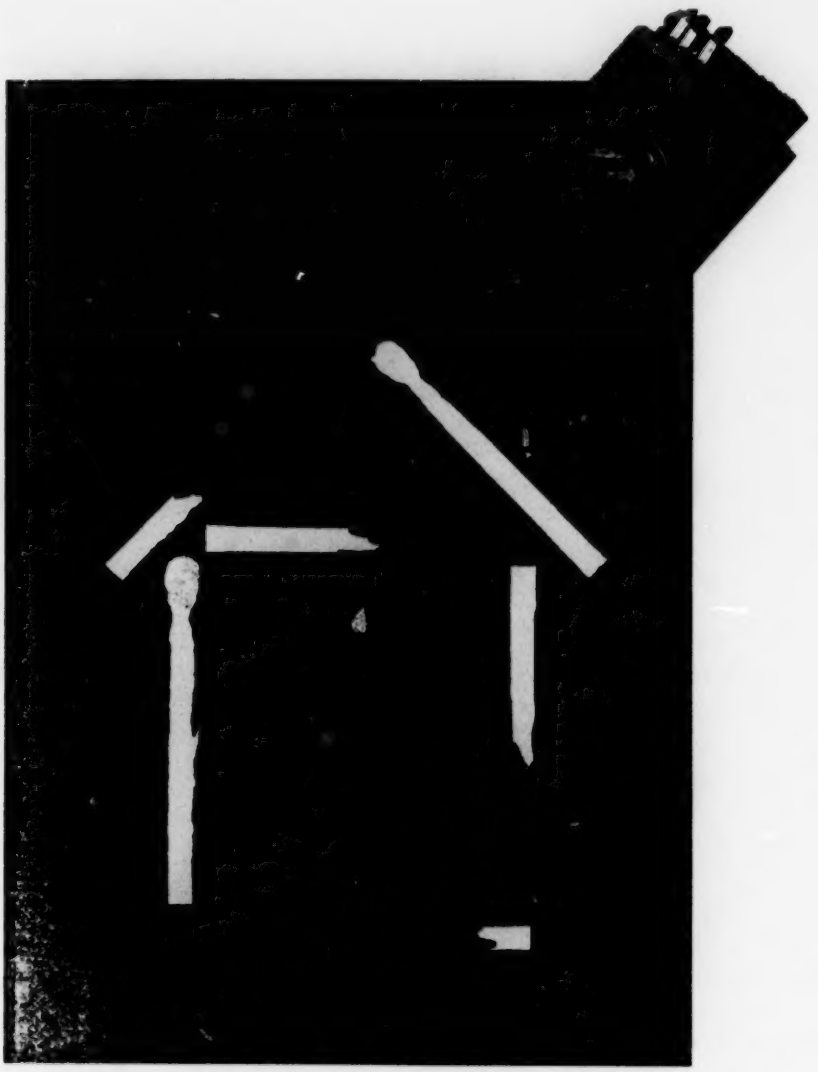
Biedermann und die Brandstifter

Ein Lehrstück ohne Lehre von Max Frisch



KOMÖDIE KASSEL

SPIELZEIT 1993/94 · HEFT 4

Lenses for Using Plays With History

1. First and foremost, a play must make you see the history "slightly differently." What is the new angle you get?

2. How does the play problematize a historical assumption?

3. Is the play disruptive, unsettling, or risking to blow apart all of what is certain about a historical construct?

4. What kind of hegemony, or power structure, is acting in this play?

5. What is the notion of punishment or justice in this play?

6. What does the play say about gender roles, or are they sublimated? How?

7. Whose voice is represented in this play? Whose voice is silenced? Who is marginalized?

8. Is the play "comfortable" about a period of history? I want plays that make us uncomfortable!

9. Does the play raise relevant or contemporary issues in the classroom?

10. What ambiguities about the play will make for lively debate in the classroom?

11. What is the notion of freedom in the play?

12. Who has the power in this time period of the play?

13. How does this play help us on our quest to get to the "truth" in history?

14. Does this play help situate an abstract concept in history?

15. What from the setting of the play do we learn is valued about that society?

16. How does the play humanize a historical subject in a new way?

17. Educational philosopher Maxine Greene exhorts readers to use literature to "unconceal" things we didn't see before. What do you think a play can "unconceal"?

18. Does this play challenge the way the teacher understands history?
Bertholt Brecht, in his play Galileo, said "The world of knowledge takes a crazy turn, when teachers themselves are taught to learn!"

Plays for In-Depth Consideration along with Companion Art Pieces
From 1183-1993

The Lion in Winter
by James Goldman
Set in 1183; written in 1966

the Unicorn tapestries, the Cloisters

Saint Joan
by George Bernard Shaw
Set from 1429-1431; written in 1923

The Burghers of Calais, by Rodin

The Tragical History of the Life and Death Of Doctor Faustus
by Christopher Marlowe
Set and written in 1592

St. Francis in Ecstasy by Bellini

Luther
by John Osborne
Set from 1506-1530; written in 1961

photograph of a Baroque Roman Catholic chalice in comparison with a Protestant chalice, circa 1540

Galileo
by Bertholt Brecht
Set from 1609-1642; written in 1938

The City Rises by Umberto Boccioni

Tartuffe
by Moliere
Set and written in 1669

The Toilet of Venus by Boucher

Our Country's Good
by Timberlake Wertenbaker
Set in 1788; written in 1988

Ugolino and Sons
by Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux

The Black Doctor
by Ira Aldridge
Set in the 1780s; written in 1844

George Washington Carver Crossing the Delaware, by Robert Colescott

Danton's Death
by Georges Buchner
Set in 1794; written in 1835

Death of Socrates,
by Jacques Louis David

The Importance of Being Earnest: A Trivial Comedy for Serious People
by Oscar Wilde
Set and written in 1895

Portrait of the Princesse de Broglie,
by Ingres

Oh, What a Lovely War,
by Joan Littlewood
Set from 1914-1917; written in 1963

contrast photographs of parades in August, 1914 London with 1915 photographs of destroyed Ypres, Belgium

A Bright Room Called Day
by Tony Kushner
Set from 1932-33, and 1985; written in 1985

Beginning by Max Beckmann

I Never Saw Another Butterfly
by Celeste Raspanti
Set from 1938-1945; written in 1971

reproductions of the children's artwork from the classrooms at Terezin, 1941-44

Les Blancs -Colonial Problems in Africa
by Lorraine Hansberry
Set and written in 1961

Dawn Dedoe's Triptych and Vanilla Nightmares from the Whitney Museum's exhibit, "The Black Male"

Twilight: Los Angeles 1992
by Anna Deveare Smith
Set in 1992; written in 1993

Terrifying Terrain by Elizabeth Murray

Docu-history play, 47 characters do monologues - Takes verbatim what people have said

Rupturing the Codes:
The Use of Drama and Dramatic Literature
in the History Classroom

Plays for In-Depth Consideration along with Companion Art Pieces

The Lion in Winter
by James Goldman

The first play in the anthology covers one of the more colorful of the reigns of the English Plantagenets. As Goldman writes in a preface to the play: "The historical material on Henry's reign is considerable insofar as battles, plots, wars, treaties and alliances are concerned....[we know] the outcome of relationships--such things as who kills whom and when," but what the play can help a history student do is imagine the quality and content of those relationships. The play is chock full of allusions to things historical--French rivalry, the Crusades, and the controversy of Thomas a Becket, but the play does its best job at helping us get at the truth underneath the historical facts and help imagine and realize this family as living, breathing human beings. The character of family dynamics in this dynasty is startling, and the prize of real estate is blood chilling. What does this play tell us about early modern European life?

the Unicorn tapestries, the Cloisters
Possibly the best-known of early modern artworks, these tapestries depict the hunt and and capture of the mythical unicorn. Furthermore, the tapestries serve as an allegory of medieval courtship, as well as elements of Christ's story. Much of the story and feeling of the hunt is felt in the play through Henry's hunting for the best son to succeed him. The tapestries and the play both wish for God's and man's triumph in all things.

Saint Joan
by George Bernard Shaw

Given its treatment in most history textbooks, the Hundred Years' War must be one of the dullest events in all of history. The war often becomes lost in the morass of dynastic details of Edwardses and whose claim beat whose claim and Valois and Plantagenet. But the war actually is one of the most important and colorful early modern events, indeed it is a major catalyst from the mercenary wars of medieval dynastic woes, to the new wars based on a burgeoning nationalism. In the midst of this transformation of fighting for a fiefdom, to fighting for a more modern reason of nationhood, Joan of Arc is an interesting pawn. While Joan's "voices" lead her to crown the Dauphin of France and lead battles against England, there is a delicious sub-plot of French civil war brewing besides. Indeed, Joan's party was opposed by a

group of Frenchmen who were pro-Burgundian (and not wanting a strong national French king) and therefore pro-English. Joan's spirit is bound into political struggles, ecclesiastical struggles and personal struggles. Ultimately, the play rises far above its own early modern context. The play is a record of what humankind does to its geniuses and saints. Humankind wants neither, and the hatred we have for our geniuses does them in. Shaw portrays Joan as a warrior, a revolutionary, a genius. And like all geniuses, she is too good for her time. The parallels to modern day notions of modernity, femininity, punishment, and justice abound. The look at Joan through history is another interesting point of investigation.

The Burghers of Calais, by Rodin

This sculpture, commissioned by the city of Rodin in 1884 has a fascinating history. In the fourteenth century English King Edward III besieged the city of Calais. Six citizens offered their lives To Edward in return for his lifting the seige. In the end Edward's pregnant wife Isabella intervened, and saved their lives. But Rodin's scupture captures these six men as they walk in sackcloth, bearing the keys to the city, as they approach the King's tent before knowing of their reprieve.

Doctor Faustus
by Christopher Marlowe

The Renaissance English Theater had a birth very similar to that of the glory days of the Italian Renaissance: a wedding of fine art, political ascendancy and stability, and prosperous commercial industry. "The drama of Marlowe, Shakespeare, Jonson, and Webster, was born of this marriage" of favorable circumstances. Christopher Marlowe, the earliest of the major English dramatists, introduced what many critics call the Renaissance "dramatic archetype of the superhero." But Marlowe's DoctorFaustus does not fit into the neat paradigm of Michelangelo's David or Leonardo da Vinci's flights of scientific fancy. A raw summary of this play involves a man who sells his soul to the devil and finds it too late to turn away from evil. As the clock marks each passing segment of time, Faustus sinks deeper and deeper into despair. When the clock strikes twelve, devils appear amid thunder and lightning and carry Faustus off to his eternal damnation. How does this fit into the Renaissance philosophy of Pico della Mirandola who decreed that "God has endowed Man with the seeds of every possibility"? Indeed there are aspects of Doctor Faustus that suggest that Faustus is a medieval hero. Many drama critics would agree with this. So how do you reconcile Marlowe to the Renaissance? Is he a throw-back to another era advocating an antihumanist stance? Is Doctor Faustus merely a reworking of a medieval Morality play? Is it that simple? The teaching of Doctor Faustus would offer many new investigations into the study of Renaissance art and science, and how the neat labelling and periodizations is not always possible.

St. Francis In Ecstasy by Bellini

Bellini's St. Francis in Ecstasy represents a furtive communion with God in nature. He stands before a cave that shades his rough desk, on which only a skull and book appear. He represents that moving from the "vita contemplativa" of the Middle Ages, into that "vita activa" which the Renaissance hoped to instill. Beyond Francis is the fertile valley and a tranquil city, a touch of the civic humanism so important to the Renaissance humanists. The sunlight pours over the subjects. But just like the dualism in Marlowe's play, this painting likewise calls into question some of our assumptions about the Renaissance. Many art books name the St. Francis piece, "in Ecstasy," but the Frick Museum which owns the piece, and several other books, name it, "St. Francis in the Desert," a name change which casts a new light on the painting. All of a sudden you have the same dualism of triumph and tragedy as Faust. Maybe Francis is in spiritual desolation much like Faustus, and is not reveling, but calling on God for redemption. That simple change in the title can reflect a new pathos on the painting, and certainly on its interpretation.

Luther
by John Osborne

This play is about another religious revolutionary, although the subject is far different from Joan of Arc. While Martin Luther evades capture and is spared the stake, his inner torment is far greater, and lasts longer. The play chronicles a young, rebel priest, intent on making his claims against the Church heard. The smarmy character of Tetzel, the seller of indulgences, is portrayed as a used-car salesman--a fabulous image by which to remember him. But Martin feels strongly about his protests, even though he is only one man against the might of the Church. He declares, "Who knows? If I break wind in Wittenberg, they might smell it in Rome." But the play does not end with the fabulous defiance at the Diet of Worms ("Here I stand, cannot do otherwise..."). Osborne treats the reader to an exploratory look at how a revolutionary can get lost in the vortex of events, and how his movement can surpass his intent, and how that effects that one lone instigator. Instead of having his allies turn on him, the way Joan became used, Martin Luther's cause is picked up by many people, and he begins to deplore the exploitation. In the final scene, he is older now, and racked with questions and uncertainty. Martin Luther examines his life with the same kind of doubt, hesitation, belief, and unbelief that we, as history students should also. A larger theme would also investigate how Martin Luther became the one of the most important symbols of German unity to the German people.

photograph of a Baroque Roman Catholic chalice in comparison with a Protestant chalice, circa 1540
These photographs offer a chance to explore visually some of the differences in the two faiths: the austere, ascetic utilitarianism of Protestantism, with the glitz of Catholic utensils, decorated with jewels to depict the preciousness of the faith.

Galileo
by Bertholt Brecht

This play, set in what we would call the full glory of the Italian Renaissance, demonstrates that such periodization is never easy. Galileo Galilei is a famous, successful scientist. However, some of his new discoveries have created a stir within the Church. Galileo has confirmed the findings of Copernicus that we really exist in a heliocentric universe and not a geocentric one--this would refute the teachings of the Church, and therefore call into question everything about the Church (so they think). But this is the Renaissance! Everything new and progressive is revered--so we often think. But Galileo is hauled in front of the Inquisition, and eventually, after seeing the torture instruments, recants his findings. Later we learn that while under arrest he does continue his scientific work, thereby not having his work get lost in the dustbin of history. But Brecht's play serves another function beyond an expose of Renaissance Science and Church exchanges. Brecht writes this play in 1930s Nazi Germany, and Brecht is hoping that the reader will see parallels between the 17th century stifling atmosphere, and Germany's current strict control.

The City Rises by Umberto Boccioni
This painting, executed in 1913, shows a struggle between the forces of old and the forces of progress. The piece elicits conversation on how time marches on, and the seemingly inevitable clash of conservatism and a new wave.

Tartuffe
by Moliere

Even without the political overtones, a comedy by Moliere makes for an excellent study. But this particular farce resonates far beyond its premise of an arrogant bourgeois being dubed by the wily opportunist Tartuffe. Moliere uses this comedy to satirize the affectations of the bourgeois class, the sometimes-hypocrisy of the clergy, and allows the lower-class servants to be the ones who know and see everything for what it really is. The study of Moliere is an interesting chance to study the social history of Louis XIV's court, the Sun King, and to study how his theater reflects his philosphy of life and court. There are rich sources for this age of theater history: accounts of theater life, playwrighting, attendance, prices, and how the plays were staged. This look affords a glimspe at the other side of Versailles. But part of the

interest in Tartuffe is the revised ending--originally Moliere ended the play by Tartuffe getting away with his scheme of swindle against the hapless Orgon. But when King Louis XIV first watched the play (remember he is Moliere's commissioner) he became indignant at the fact that no one saw through Tartuffe, and he demanded a re-write. Therefore, in the published version, in the final scene of Act V, scene vii, an Officer of the Court rushes in, at the last moment to declare that Tartuffe is going to jail--he has been discovered. The Officer announces: "We serve a Prince to whom all sham is hateful, A Prince who sees in our inmost hearts, And can't be foiled by any trickster's arts. His royal soul, though generous and human, views all things with discernment and scumen; His sovereign reason is not lightly swayed, and all his judgements are discreetly weighed." This dispels any notion that Louis would have been fooled by Tartuffe. This control of culture is an interesting topic, and one could be compared to the use, control, and exploitation of culture by Totalitarian rulers.

The Toilet of Venus by Boucher

This painting is a perfect example of art commissioned by royal families from the Pre-Revolution era to show the images of "fancified life," and excess that the French Revolution will be against in 1789. The Toilette of Venus is a work commissioned by Mme. Pompadour which shows the "never never land" of rococco splendor: the doves represent the peace of harmony of life, and the insense container represent all the scents of a wonderful life. This is the lifestyle Moliere satirizes, and the lifestyle that eventually will anger enough of the French people to struggle against it.

Our Country's Good
by Timberlake Wertenbaker

This play explores several fascinating arenas, not least of all the value and power of theater itself. The play focuses on British Second Lieutenant Ralp Clark and a shipful of convicts he accompanies to the penal colony in Australia. The play opens up discussion about punishment, justice, treatment of indigenous colonial people, and authority and control. Clark believes that one one way the convicts might behave better is if he used them to put on a play. Of course, me meets with opposition, but we watch him deal with the resistance. Clark and his superiors grapple with the notion of "What is a stateman's responsibility?" The play offers a chance to grapple with the writings of Rousseau and imagine them in a penal colony. But, on the larger scale, the play helps us imagine redemption, and see how drama, and self-expression in general, is a refuge and one of the only real weapons against hopelessness.

Ugolino and Sons by Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux
This nineteenth-century sculpture is from a story by Dante about an Italian Count sentenced to prison with his sons. They have been in jail for awhile and the sons have just told the father that he should eat them so he can live through the ordeal. Ugolino is faced with this dilemma, and it raises questions about survival. Carpeaux makes the men nude so as to universalize their struggle and anguish. The sculpture echoes the play's dualism of strength and anguish.

The Black Doctor
by Ira Aldridge

Ira Aldridge, the first noted African-American actor, spent most of his career in Europe, where he could perform more freely. He worked as a valet to actor Edmund Kean and when the stage bug bit. Born in 1807 in New York City, Aldridge saw plays at the African Grove Theater and knew he wanted to work in theater. But the choices were few: he could work in blackface song-and-dance shows, or emigrate. In 1824 Aldridge sailed for England, never to return. The story of his life in Europe is one of struggle, recognition and success. He played comedy, melodrama, and Othello, Titus Andronicus, Macbeth, Lear, Shylock, and Richard III. In 1846 he wrote The Black Doctor for himself to star in. But he always faced the same problems of prejudice--much like the character Fabian in his play--he always had to prove himself. Much like the character, he provoked hostility, but many people eventually realized his great talent. Unlike Fabian, Aldridge lived to an old age with children, property, British citizenship and many honors. This play deals with the character of the black doctor in France, how he is perceived in society, and his eventual incarceration in the Bastille. Besides the social history angle of the play, it offers a chance to explore some of the themes of freedom which Maxine Greene discusses in her book The Dialectic of Freedom. It could be argued that while in prison, naming and overcoming his opporession, Fabian is actually more free than in the society to which he always accomodated. Greene writes, "Freedom of mind and the opportunity to realize certain potentialities are conceivable under slavery." While in prison Fabian can imagine real freedom, and even though chained, is more free than in his previous state of pseudo-freedom. At least, an interesting debate...

George Washington Carver Crossing the Delaware, by Robert Colescott
Robert Colescott in 1975 painted the **George Washington Carver Crossing the Delaware**, recasting the famous Washington scene with black parodies and stereotypes. These are faces often used to hawk goods in the white world, and now they are in an scene celebrating American history in a place where we

don't expect to see them. Where should they be? Where are blacks in scenes of American greatness? What about the exclusion of blacks from our scenes? There is more anger here than first meets the eye. This can raise questions about the use and visibility of blacks in drama as well.

Danton's Death by Georges Buchner

Danton's Death works as one of those great tumultuous Italian frescos. It envelops the reader, transports you to a heroic time, and fills you with the sense of grandeur and chaos of a particular moment in time. The play also serves as a mouthpiece for Buchner's politics and convictions about life. Born in 1813, Buchner becomes swept up in the revolutionary activities of 1830 and 1831, only to see how futile all the protests became--life went back to its conservative shell. Danton's Death is a renunciation of that kind of action, and calling on another period that held such promise--the French Revolution, the heady days whn Danton and Robespierre might right all the wrongs done to humankind. But there is very little action in the play--Buchner is much more concerned with the anguish of life. Buchner borrows several conventions from Shakespeare, indeed Danton resembles Hamlet in his refusal to do anything. But the play is full of Shakespearean snapshots, and much of the play is discussion and reflection. But Buchner is better than Shakespeare in invoking what the feeling of the mob is undergirding this struggle between Danton and Robespierre.What gives the play its particular bite is that Danton's panic vision of the world mirrors Buchners. Buchner despairs that all human action is futile, but loves the notion of a political fanatic. Buchner falls ill with typhus in 1837 and dies at age 23.

Death of Socrates,
by Jacques Louis David

This work offers an interesting study in opposing forces and contradictions much like Buchner's play. Death of Socrates by David in 1787 is meant to be a didactic painting. The work depicts Socrates gesturing to his "disciples" (yes, 12) as the hemlock is handed over to him. The painting is commissioned by a constutitional monarchist from a liberal family in a Paris salon; Louis XVI asked for a similar themed work. Why? The painting shows how the paradigm shifts:
1787--Louis liked it because it represented an exemplary life with a moral duty;
1791--now the image changes to victimization by a tyrant; a martyr; the government crushing the individual.
As the play poses, what is the truth?

The Importance of Being Earnest: A Trivial Comedy for Serious People
by Oscar Wilde

Wilde's Importance of Being Earnest is a comedy of manners, "a trivial comedy for serious people," warns Wilde. The play is a virtual babble of wit, but below the surface of noise, for the serious spectator, Wilde reveals a gruesome society built entirely of vanities. Lady Bracknell interrogates potential suitor Jack Worthing: "Who was your father? Was he born in what the Radical papers call the purple of commerce, or did he rise from the ranks of the aristocracy?" Wilde's work also deals with the need to escape from this closeted world and indulge in some secret sin, the concept of Bunburying so beloved of Algernon and then John. Wilde stated his attitude toward sin in an article, "The Critic as Artist": "What is termed as Sin is an essential element of progress. Without it the world would stagnate...by its curiosity Sin increases the experience of the Race...asserts individualism and saves us from the monotony of type." Of course the real importance lies in being facetious: to humiliate the authorities with sedition disguised as impudence. It would be prudent also to compare this comedy to William Wycherley's seventeenth-century play, The Country Wife, to show little British upper-class society had changed in two centuries.

Portrait of the Princesse de Broglie, by Ingres
This work is one of hyper-realism, which Wilde strives to achieve in a satiric tone for his play. It depicts a wealthy person whose status and wealth mean everything. However, there remains only a shallow understanding about this woman--like the well-to-do in the play, nothing more than the surface knowledge is offered or desired. She embodies the same aloof qualities which our characters have in the play.

Oh, What a Lovely War,
by Joan Littlewood

This play from the 1960s, is a devastatingly "light" look at World War I. Set against the conventions of the British Dance Hall, it offers songs and sketches, even a puppet show designed to reveal the irony and the enthusiasm behind going off to the war. It is very much like the old "Laugh-In" television show with its comedy of "war games," and the very real, hauntingly innocuous songs like the title of the play. But then the seriousness sets in, and we are confronted with tableaux of dying soldiers, and the endlessness of boredom of the trenches. One touching scene involves the English and German soldiers celebrating Christmas together and realizing their very real common bonds. The production makes wondrful use of contemporary popular songs, diaries, photographs, newspapers, editorials and cartoons. The writers suggest that the troops be costumed in Pierrot doll costumes, just as absurd as the war itself.

contrast photographs of parades in August, 1914 London with 1915 photographs of destroyed Ypres, Belgium
From Berlin to Paris to London there were shouts of joy in the parades announcing the declaration of war; the photographs reveal the graffiti, the smiles, even flowers stuck in their rifles. It was, according to one German, to be "Breakfast in Paris." But no one was fully aware of the horrors implicit in modern weapons of destruction. By the next spring, though belief in a speedy war had vanished, and Europeans began to realize the full implication of what had been unleashed

A Bright Room Called Day
by Tony Kushner

A Bright Room Called Day follows a group of artists and political activists struggling to preserve themselves in 1930s Berlin as the Weimar Republic surrenders to the seduction of fascism. Interestingly, Kushner also takes the play beyond the bounds of historical reality with the morally outraged outpourings of a contemporary (for 1985) New York woman. This woman's fury at the Reagan administration brings a discomfiting parallel between the 1930s and the 1980s, and Kushner allows himself to vent his spleen at what he calls the "frightening similarities." Kushner quotes Berthold Brecht from the 1930s in his description of Berlin to echo his day in the 1980s: "When there was injustice only/And no rebellion." Several years after the initial run of this play, Kushner conceded that A Bright Room Called Day is an immature play. In an interview, he said, "It is immature certainly, to write a play which asks an audience...to consider comparisons between Ronald Reagan and Adolf Hitler. Bright Room is an immature play." But Kushner contends that he saw in Reagan's career a kindred phenomenon to Hitler's accession to power. How can a history teacher still use such an "immature play"? How can you draw parallels of artists in the 1930s and 1980s and make comparisons? The play poses extraordinary questions about the survival artists during Totalitarian regimes, and people who feel they are living on the cusp of something very important and perhaps cataclysmic.

Beginning by Max Beckmann
Like Brecht, Beckmann wrote that he believed deeply that he was witness to a horrific age. In Beginning, Beckmann uses the triptych, the medieval form for sacred subjects, to give his his subjects a religious dimension.
This painting is done after the Nazis had lain seige to Europe, and Beckmann emigrated to America. But he is haunted by his past, and treatment in Germany.
In the 1930s Beckmann's work is exploited in a governmentally sponsored show of "Degenerative Art." The piece deals with his "beginning" to deal with the past and

his memories. There are many parallels one can draw between the artists in Kushner's play and all of the themes and warnings from Beckmann's childhood and other people's childhoods crowding over his mind. You have the problems of stigma, of isolation, and hopefully a feeling of the desperation of being an artist at this time. Beckmann is an excellent example of an artist's state-of-mind and his world view.

I Never Saw Another Butterfly
by Celeste Raspanti

From 1942 to 1945 over 15,000 Jewish children passed through Terezin, stopping-off place on the way to the gas chambers at Auschwitz. When the Russians liberated the camp in 1945, only about one hundred children were still alive. This play, based on s a true story, focuses on Raja Englanderova, a young girl from Prague, who outlives all of her friends and family. Her play is a memory play, reliving the first days at the Camp, her life before the Camp, her friendship with Honza, and her tutelage under her teacher Irena Synkova. At the centerpiece of the play is a recitation by a number of the students of the poems they wrote while at Terezin. Irena Synkova took it upon herself to teach the children, and have them express themselves in words, music, and drawing. In spite of the warnings from the SS Guards, Irena kept teaching the children. Eventually Irena's lottery number is called, and as she prepares to board the train for Auschwitz she ponders the old portraits ob Bible martyrs: "I saw a picture of a saint about to be stabbed with a lance. I used to think that the medieval painters were incapable of presenting feelings like fear, astonishment, or pain--so it looked like the saints had shown no interest in their own martyrdom. Now I understand the saints better--what could they do?" Irena also leaves a buried sack of drawings and poems for Raja. They are eventually published and provided the basis for this play.

reproductions of the children's artwork
from the classrooms at Terezin, 1941-44
Carefully sheltered by co-prisoners, this art work by children ages seven to seventeen is a witness to the Holocaust. Many of them are of their hopes and dreams for when they returned home. Some of are of their surroundings, but many transcend the barbed wire which kept them in place.

Les Blancs
by Lorraine Hansberry

As an adult Lorraine Hansberry remembered crying over the newsreels of the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in the 1930s. She worried about those "poor Africans" taken captive by the Whites. Later she worked for W.E.B. DuBois, and learned from his disillusionment at working for independence for African nations. In the 1950s Hansberry read of the British-Kenya struggles and the Mau Mau rebellion. Out of this

anguish, Hansberry became the first major Black American playwright to focus on Africa and the struggle for black liberation. For her A Raisin in the Sun had been a monumental success; but she felt that there was so much more to be said and learned about Africa. At the turn of the century, DuBois had said that "The problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color line." Hansberry's play is an effort to come to grips with the problem of color and colonialism in the world; she wanted to determine how much color had to do with the root causes of the conflicts between the capitalist West and the Third World. The play focuses on Tshembe Matoseh, a son of Africa returning for his father's funeral from his new life in London, only to find himself enmeshed in the liberation struggle of his people. This play has new life, in light of the recent phoenix of South Africa after a century of struggles between blacks and whites. The play suggests no absolutes, but does affirm that a moral imperative to see justice served is crucial to become free.

Dawn Dedoe's Triptych and Vanilla Nightmares from the Whitney Museum's exhibit, "The Black Male"

Dawn Dedoe offers a triptych based on her observations of black males. On the left is a black-John Wayne image and on the right is a black-Rambo image, but in the center is an iconic representation of Christ as Black Male and they are all suspended by chains with physical constraints, suggesting their being behind bars.

1. Is she glorifying or eroticizing these men?
2. Is it the effect of pop culture and its effects on the streets?
3. Is she trying to show a vulnerability or openness in the men?

The piece called **Vanilla Nightmares** depicts newspapers of power superimposed with blacks and scary images, that what goes on in daily is worse than in the news.

Twilight Los Angeles 1992
by Anna Deveare Smith

As we head to the milennium many writers like Smith and Kushner are very eager to make some sense out of our age in relation to the twilight of the twentieth century. In her plays Smith has chosen the voices and clashes that best reflect the diversity and tension of twentieth century America in turmoil. Twilight is "documentary theater," in which she uses the verbatim words of people who experienced the Los Angeles riots to expose and explore the devastating human impact of that event. Smith chooses words from a disabled Korean man, a white Hollywood press agent, a teenage black gang member, a macho Mexican-American artist, Rodney King's aunt, beaten truck driver Reginald Denny, former Los Angeles police chief Daryl Gates, and other wirnesses, particpants, and victims. The play is interested in exploring the complex forces of race, class, and other socioeconomic and political issues that confront us in

the twilight of this century. It would be indeed sobering, and perhaps depressing, to compare our current issues which border on barbarity to the issues in plays about the eraly modern period--how have issues changed since The Lion in Winter, or Saint Joan?

Terrifying Terrain by Elizabeth Murray
The title alone explains some of the fearsomeness with which we grapple in our contemporary age. The work is one of fragmented ("shaped canvases is how Murray describes it) canvases jutting out at us in our space, and making us very aware of new dimensions. It is an explosion of shapes, yet we keep coming back to the center. But all that is in the center is a hole...Ready, debate!

Other Plays Worthy of Study

Abingdon Square, 1987, Maria Irene Fornes, is a play about a young woman's sexual awakening in Greenwich Village during World War I. The play has a Henry-James feel about New York, but it is stark in its contrast to the horrors of the European war which begin to dawn on the Americans. Marion is no longer the same. and neither is America.

The Adding Machine, by Elmer Rice--1923; a terrifying and funny look at the dehumanization of society in the technocratic age; a fabulous piece much like German expressionism about protagonist Mr. Zero, who is replaced by a machine and murders The Boss. Expressionistic drama is one which relies on these characteristics:
a. anti-realism
b. abrupt, jerky dialogue
c. short scenes
d. characters representative of a class
e. frequent use of effects of lighting in the absence of realistic scenery

The Admiral Crichton, by James Barrie in 1902, takes a somewhat hard-edged look at England's class structure. Crichton, the austerely resourceful butler, becomes the king of the island on which he and his employers are shipwrecked because they have no survival skills and he can do anything. All defer to him. But back in England, the old pecking order re-emerges. Barrie exposes the reckless rigidity of the system.

After Magritte is a very short 1970 piece by Tom Stoppard wherein he presents a logical explanation for the odd costumes and positions of the figures in avante-garde painting. Another naturalistic bizarre piece by Stoppard.

A Man for All Seasons, by Robert Bolt, 1960, a chronicle play very much in the classical line, although with a Brechtian interlocutor figure that Bolt calls the Common Man. This play reveals the tension between the administration of Henry VIII of England and his advisors Thomas More and Thomas Cromwell, and how conscience and politics do not always mix. More cannot swear religious fealty to Henry, and so endures execution. It would be interesting to add some slides to class of the famous Holbein portraits of More and Cromwell and discuss how they hang in New York's Frick Museum: they are paired in the gallery as they once opposed each other in life (Cromwell urged Henry to execute More). The More portrait reveals a stubborn look of a principled man, and Cromwell's sidelong glance (toward the More portrait) speaks volumes about Cromwell as a schemer.

Anatol, by Arthur Schnitzler in 1893, is a wonderful addition to a unit on fin-de-siecle Vienna. While the work of Sigmund Freud in psychology and sex relations is well-known, the art nouveau paintings of Gustav Klimt and his subconscious dreamscapes would add to the mood of this era known in art as the Secession Movement. Schnitzler's collection of vignettes follows the shifting amours of a young bachelor, a first-rate showcase for Schnitzler's enlightening insights in to the character of sex relations. Along with Gustav Mahler and Arnold Schoenberg, this era is known for its melancholy, explorative, and sensual culture.

Andre, 1798, by William Dunlap. This play is one of the first American plays available for study in terms of being extant and coherent. Dunlap is the first American to devote his full time career to being a dramatist. Andre , a strongly nationalistic and even chauvinistic play, has a reverence for George Washington, recently retired as the first President. The play focuses on British Major John Andre, who captured the affection of Americans as a "martyr-hero." Its unified action and dignified verse makes Andre the best American play of its time.

An Inspector Calls, 1947 J.B. Priestley thriller. The 1994 revival of this play presents a fabulous look at how a designer can transform a play and reach new levels of historical meaning through visuals. As the

curtain rises on An Inspector Calls there are gasps of astonishment and waves of applause. There are air-raid sirens blaring, urchins scampering about the stage, clanging and commotion, and then the house--an outsized dollhouse, resting precariously on stilts. This is the house of Arthur Birling, remote and removed from the world of blitzed-out London. The play unravels to show how the lives of the Edwardian upper-crust Birlings are linked to problems of the real world, whether they want to recognize it or not. A stranger has the maid announce him as 'Inspector Goole,' an suddenly the House of Birling cracks in two and swings open, baring the drawing room-interior to the audience. Next come the souls. Designer Ian MacNeil has said he "tried to visualize as sharply, and deeply as possible the class structure (and struggle) at the core of Priestley's piece." The play is also an interesting piece of history for the sense of optimism that existed about the possible new world after World War II. In Britain there was a consensus that the country wished to end the class system--which the war essentially did. "During the war seven out of ten of Britain's adult population listened to JB Priestley broadcasting his doctrine of Christian humanism. He was saying we need to start thinking in terms of community instead of individuals. Churchill eventually banned his broadcasts because he felt the *only* war aim was to get rid of Hitler, and Priestley was always arguing, 'No, it's just a means to an end. We need a revision of what the end is.' So there was this extraordinary time when, in British domestic politics, people were actually engaged in a romantic ideal of what society could be like," says Revival director Stephen Daldry. The play works on several levels to reveal old British society in the final paroxyms during the the crucible of World War II.

Antigone, revised in 1944 by Jean Anouilh. Jean Anouilh wrote that the "theme is the starting point of a dramatic composition--plot, setting, and characters all come after." Submit to immoral practicality or defy the system idealistically? That is the theme of Anouilh's Antigone, vastly relevant to the German-occupied France in his 1944 premiere. Antigone pursues profound questions of human responsibility: to family, honor, the state. At the 1944 premiere the play was well-received by both the French and the invader, unwelcome Germans. Why? Why would a play based on Sophocles' tale of a young girl defying the orders of her tyrannical uncle not offend the oppressors as they sat watching the martyr herself? Was it that they saw her only as an arrogant, petulant teenager? Did Creon seem to be the wise and benevolent despot? That is the marvel of this play--nothing is either black or white. The audience is free to reach their own conclusions. And the Nazi conclusion, based on their experience as very efficient tyrants, was that Creon was right. After several of sold-out performances, however, they began to see that the French saw something different in the play. Perhaps it seemed more like a parable of the Vichy government, and so the officials closed it down. They silenced Antigone's voice. But as you study the play, it is not as easy as you think. Antigone or Creon?

Are You Now or Have You Ever Been? is a 1972 documentary drama by Eric Bentley showing through transcripts of the McCarthy Hearings, how the opportunistic movement got out of hand. This play is very similar to the kind of treatment Anna Deveare Smith now creates with urban problems.

Back to Methuselah, an epic by GB Shaw, 1922, would not be read, but investigated and discussed for the issues Shaw raises. He explores evolution, before and after Darwin, with a great deal of debunking of various scientists and philosophers, especially Darwin. The notion of chance in the development of species, Shaw contends, is suicidal; thus the world sits back and lets things like World War I occur. No. Evolution must be *willed*. We have to decide what we need to become and and then become it: wise. And in order to become wise we must live longer than the customary seventy years, for only ancients are sage. Shaw wanted this to be his masterpiece--it deals with legend, criticism, myth, and prophecy. A London critic once exclaimed: "the book of Genesis is a short summary" for this play. Indeed, Shaw reaches back to Adam and Eve, and ties it in with the end of World War I--how can man overcome his folly? As a character explains, "Political and social problems raised by our civilization cannot be solved by mere human mushrooms who decay and die when they are just beginning to have a glimmer of the wisdom and knowledge needed for their own government." This character then cries out his slogan, "Back to Methuselah!"

The Balcony, is a 1957 anti-fascists masquerade by Jean Genet. The Balcony is a brothel surrounded by

the sordid, visceral times of the Spanish Civil War. This is Genet's miniature of society: nonentities come to the bordello to fulfill fantasies of power, sadism, and submission. He raises the question, "What difference does it make whether the authority of power is true or false?" Genet decides that the costumes of importance, not important people, that run society. At the final curtain, Madame Irma dismissing the audience but warns them that their homes are more artificial than the Balcony of the players. She directs the public to a side exit, to avoid the gunfire of the Revolution.

The Bald Soprano is a quick one-act "anti-play" by Eugene Ionesco of 1950, which is commonly taken as a revelation of the frailty of human intercourse (the Smiths and Martin uncommunicatively communicate about this and that, worrying over the vapidity of language in a vapid age), but Ionesco also meant it as a n attack on the emptiness of bourgeois life.

Biedermann und die Brandstifter, (known as "Mr. Babbitt and the Arsonists," or "The Fire Raisers,") a 1958 Max Frisch work of the German national-guilt variety. This is an absurdist play, a genre which seemed to treat the senselessness and lack of purpose in life in senseless dialogue and apparently purposeless action. The absurdists were not the the first to view the world as bizarrely illogical, only the first to to depict it in a bizarrely illogical style. Frisch's play focuses on a Biedermann, a modern, German Everyman, an average man. Though disquieted by numerous fires which have broken out in the town, he takes an unknown tramp into his house. The tramp brings several friends and they start piling up barrels filled with gasoline. Biedermann, while nervous and suspicious, goes out of his way to make them comforatable. In the end, he even hands them matches with which they set fire to his house, and ultimately, blow up the city. All along a chorus of firemen comment on the inability to intervene until it is too late. The wider implications are evident.

The Breasts of Tiresias, is a 1917 surrealist drama by Guillaume Apollinaire, is the first playwright to coin the phrase "surrealism," as he strove to rebel against the realist and ideological tendencies of Ibsen. He wanted to mine the repressive patterns of society, so Appolinaire's protagonist, Therese not only changes sex but gives up her breasts (as balloons which then explode) so that he/she can better prosper in life. But later discovers herself again, and returns to her husband and child as a woman. Hard to explain.

Call Me Madam, a 1950 musical with book by Howard Lindsey and Russell Crouse. This libretto is a wonderful look into the conceit of post-World War II America, and how we viewed ourselves on the world's stage. In real-life 1950s politics, renowned hostess Perle Mesta had just been assigned a diplomatic post in Luxembourg. This musical follows the appointment of fictional Mrs. Sally Adams to the little European country of Lichtenburg. They are in financially troubled times, but do not want to take the USA's generous offer--they want to remain self-sufficient. But the Americans are crowing, "Does Anyone Need Any Money Today?" A lightweight look at early 1950s politics and how we perceived ourselves.

Can You Hear Their Voices?, 1931, by Hallie Flanagan and Margaret Ellen Clifford, is one of the most compelling "agitprop" pieces (from agitational propaganda--plays designed to influence the audience's politics in a coarsely aggressive manner; fringe theater groups produced most of these works which do not date well, but are interesting social historical pieces). Based on a Whitaker Chambers story about the Midwest drought, Voices uses slides and staged scenes to show how natural disaster, greed and government indifference combine to create starvation in the America's heartland. Voices is a liberal cautionary tale: if a democratic government fails to help the people, it will be responsible for the rise of communism and perhaps even in an armed revolution. The starving farmers take matters into their own hands to feed their families. Interestingly, this play pre-dates The Grapes of Wrath by eight years. Flanagan and Clifford use the character of wealthy Harriet Bageheot and her "conversion to the cause" to sway audience members. But the play infuriated many people--the right saw it as too radical, and the Left felt it leaned too much away from true Leftism.

Chicken Soup with Barley, 1958, Arnold Wesker, comes in the wake of the other new "angry" playwrights. This play defined Wesker's territory: plays intending to infuse humanitarianism into politics. He speaks of the need for communication, understanding and even love in politics. This has shades to such current

plays as Cheryl West's 1994 play Holiday Heart. There is a great deal of Clifford Odet's-feel in Wesker's plays, especially in his realistic Jewish dialect and how he views class solidarity. One character at the end of Chicken Soup exclaims, "You've got to care or you'll die."

The Churchill Play, by Howard Brenton, is a 1974 play whose subtitle reads, "as it will be performed in the winter of 1984 by the internees of Churchill Camp somewhere in England." Brenton symbolizes the postwar radical, eager for a solution the world's problems yet as cynical about the Party line as about establishment business-as-usual. Brenton ruinously exposes Britain's heroes, and exhorts his audience to confront reality and fix our eyes upon the truth. An interesting angry play, and interesting art even though 1984 came and went without seeing detention camps in Britain.

The Country Wife, a 1675 William Wycherley comedy, is the prototypical Restoration theater piece after Charles II returns to England. A fabulous look into the values and mores of the landed gentry, with their emphasis on property, propriety, with a behind-the-scenes look at fidelity and relationships.

Cracks in the Ice, 1988, by Tova Yanay, is a play based on the recollections of Aranka Pollak, Auschwitz Concentration Camp prisoner #4777, who worked in the Political Department of the Auschwitz Gestapo Headquarters as a typist and secretary to several SS officials. She testified at the Eichmann trial.

The Crucible, a timely chronicle play by Arthur Miller in 1953, was boldly unveiled at the height of the McCarthy purge of liberals, Communists, and other non-conformists. This look at a purge of "witches" in old Salem, Massachusetts, makes a vivid case against trial by character assassination. Always timely.

The Death of the Last Black Man in the Whole Entire World, 1989, by Suzan-Lori Parks, is a politically urgent play, and is a n unusual, experimental probe of history. This is a non-narrative, absurdist work exalting black English, and showing her profound interest in history and identity. She writes, "We are not Africans, but African-Americans. We have to make out of what we're stuck with.

Day Of Absence, 1966, Douglas Turner Ward. This is a biting social comedy of social protest. The action involves Clem and Luke, two white shopkeepers, who discover that all of the blacks in town have suddenly and mysteriously disappeared. The whole town goes to pieces! The whites cannot run their businesses, their government, or their homes without the Blacks. Coincidentally, two high government officials are also gone--"do you s'ppose they have Nigra blood?" asks Clem. The rest of the play is the frantic search for the blacks. Ward asks that the play be performed by blacks in white-face make-up, and his bitterness toward the white system is evident in every line of the play.

The Deputy, a 1963 chronicle play in free verse by Rolf Hochhuth, is an imposing play tackling an imposing subject: Hitler's attempted extermination of the Jewish people. He centers his play around an inarguable fact: that Pope Pius XII stood by and did nothing, even as Nazis rounded up Jewish Romans. This play is also a study in the reaction a play can have--the visceral and explosive reactions. The events he treats all actually occurred, and he bases his characters on actual people. Hochhuth wrote the play also while the world searched for the laughing, sadistic Dr. Josef Mengele. People said that the whole world was responsible for Hitler--why single out the Pope? Hochhuth wrote that Hitler greatly feared the power of the Church, but Pius preferred that Hitler keep Stalin far from the gates of the Vatican. So Hochhuth shows how the Pope made his final bargain with Hell.

Edmund, a 1982 David Mamet play, is an interesting look into the journey of self-degradation which Mamet associates with the yuppie-syndrome. It is a dark adventure and unlike many other Mamet works.

Emma, 1976, Howard Zinn, tells the story of Emma Goldman who breaks away from her job, her husband, and her family, to go to New York and join a group of anarchists. The play focuses on Emma's organizing, agitating, and time in prison "for complicity in McKinley's assassination), and her group of friends and their time in Lower East Side cafes. Sort of a Socialist-Cheers...

Emperor of Haiti, originally written in 1938 by Langston Hughes, is located in Haiti, at the time of the successful rebellion against the forces of Napoleon Bonaparte, focusing on Jean Jacques Dessalines, a black rebel who rose to power as a general and then emperor. The issue of the play, however, is not just his struggle against whites, but also the manner in which Dessalines becomes corrupted by his sense of of power and desire for luxury. Important to his failure is the interracial rivalry between the blacks and the mulattos of Haiti. By describing the Haitians' excessive concern about distinctions based on color, class and culture, Hughes warned African Americans against the destructive divisions which such prejudice can create.

Everyman is the most famous and enduring of the medieval morality plays, in which the hero, faced with the Last Journey, asks Fellowship, Beauty, Kindred, Goods, Discretion and Knowledge to accompany him in death. All draw back. Only Good Deeds is ready to support him. A quintessential play for understanding the mind control of the medieval church. This kind of play was the only theater sanctioned (and therefore the only kind created) for centuries.

Fashion, or Life in New York, 1845, by Anna Cora Mowatt. This is one of the first plays ever produced by an American woman and remained a favorite in repertories for decades. The play is a cousin to the kind of play Wilde perfected in Importance of Being Earnest, as she skewers New York society and affected French manners and speech. Her characterization of Mrs. Tiffany is a composite of the people around Mrs. Mowatt. Her characters, dialogue, and situations are very Dickensian and very interesting to see again over a century later.

Fences, 1987, August Wilson. In the 1970s Wilson attempted a kaleidoscope of images and words in spectacles dealing with such figures as Stalin and Queen Victoria. In the 1980s and 1990s Wilson returned to what he does best: revealing layers of feeling and complexity within the African-American family. In this play Wilson uncovers the problems of one family, with broken dreams and broken promises, and how these families fit into American history, not just Afro-American history. is a domestic drama focused on Troy Maxson and his family. One of the greatest sluggers in the history of the Negro Leagues, he has been denied national visibility by the unwritten Jim Crow code which barred Blacks from organized baseball until 1947. Although by these times in the play, the 1950s, the barriers had come down, Maxson remains embittered and distrustful of whites and he opposes his son's desire to accept a college sports scholarship. But sports is not what the play is all about. The focuses on those Blacks who made the Migration to Northern cities, and how, again, the dream is deferred. The compactness of dialogue and theme is often likened to Miller's Death of a Salesman.

Flyin' West, 1992, by Pearl Cleage, is a captivating historical play about four Black women who fled the racist South in the late 1800s, and headed west, in search of the prosperity and autonomy promised by the 1860 Homestead Act. The so-called "Exodus of 1879" saw 20,000- 40,000 Blacks reach Kansas under the leadership of charismatic Benjamin "Pap" Singleton. Eventually the western states enacted Jim Crow laws just as harsh as the ones the Blacks had tried to escape from in the South. The play examines how the women struggle to keep their land in the all-black town of Nicodemus, Kansas. It weaves story-telling about slavery, discrimination, spousal abuse, and women trying to take control of their lives.

The Furies of Mother Jones, 1977, Maxine Klein, is a play trying very hard to be an epic. It deals with Mother Jones, the voice of History, and her attempts to organize and strengthen Appalachian miners. It deals with these people and their ancestral land, and the corruption of the Union, and the greed of Management. Although it is preachy, it does deal very well with the indissoluble bonds the people feel for each other.

Ghosts, 1882, by Henrik Ibsen, is an epic of theater history that looks back at Aeschylus and is a precursor for Eugene O'Neill. The past (the title's symbolic ghosts) decides the present, the family is essential yet unbearable, and life involves the making of terrible choices. How important for an era in which the nation-state is emerging and the states are working at creating the model state and the model citizen. Can we escape the past? This play dealt with syphilis, a taboo subject and the play's reception prompted Ibsen to

write An Enemy of the People. Ibsen is among the first to embark on "problem plays," and the oppression of the individual by bourgeois society is a constant theme in these plays.

The Government Inspector, 1836, Nikolai Gogol. The plot premise is a classic: the corrupt officials of a provincial town mistake an obscure clerk for an all-powerful state inspector. They fete and bribe the impostor, even engage him to the mayor's daughter. Just before the boom falls, the inspector flees. The play is famous not only for its entertainment value, but because Tsar Nicholas allowed it to be performed: after all, the Russian bureaucracy is pictured as pompous, dishonest, and stupid. "Everyone got what he deserved, " the Tsar supposedly said after the premiere, "and I most of all."

Having Our Say, 1994, adapted by Emily Mann. This play focuses on two real-life "colored women," sisters who are over 100 and have seen everything of the twentieth century. The play, like their book, is full of the honesty and courage with which they have lived their lives. The story of the Delaney sisters is America's story, in all of its richness and glory, and sadly, all of its bigotry and prejudice too. They offer a look at their lives from rural North Carolina, through schools for Blacks, onto Harlem, and then the suburbs all with the joys, frustrations, and struggles of what it has meant to be Black in America.

Heaven and Shit, by Fernando Arrabal--1970, typifies the political Arrabal, a Spanish playwright who said "theater must be dangerous and revelatory," and calls his style the "Theater of Panic." This play reveals his obsessions: historical, autobiographical and psychological. A child of the 1930s Spanish Civil War, Arrabal recalls those repressions and terrors, and also turns to the 1960s subjects of Black Power, student rebellions, and the Manson murders.

The Heiress, 1947, by Ruth and Augustus Goetz, is a "well-made play," dealing with the psychological horror which two men wreak upon a nervous young woman in 1850s society-conscious New York. Dr. Austin Sloper is a sternly protective if resolutely unloving father to his daughter Catherine, an initially plain, commonplace woman whose life he wrecks for her own good. The grossly shy Catherine meets Morris Townshend, and he is drawn to her money. How Catherine gains the upper hand is what provides the play with a dark fascination. When toward the end, her aunt is shocked by her cruelty, Catherine's answer is, "I've been taught by masters." An interesting play on women's roles and the expectations of women.

Hogan's Goat, 1958, by William Alfred is a play which reveals some of the distinctive traits of the Irish in America, and some of the distinctive problems they experienced here. This is a poetic play, but an eminently approachable one about politicians and loyalty and clannishness in the Irish community. Alfred chose the poetic format so as to transform the Irish into an extraordinary expression and experience. The Irish of 1890s Brooklyn transcend their time with a story that is universal in its tale of cynicism, pride, and corruption.

The Iceman Cometh, is a parable from 1946 by Eugene O'Neill. O'Neill wrote that "parables treat the life of the spirit," and it is that spirit which is the subject of most of O'Neill's plays. This play is among O'Neill most developed with the author as observer, and the world of men and women as pathetic and deluded souls, seeking solace beyond the conflicts that cripple them. One of Iceman's characters says: "It's the No-Chance Saloon, the End of the Line Cafe, The Bottom of the Sea Ratskeller. Don't you notice the beautiful calm in the atmosphere? That's because it's the last harbor. No one here has to worry about where they're going next, because there is no farther they can go." This post-war despair is something O'Neill had been mining for years.

Incident at Vichy, is a 1964 Arthur Miller play in which he again explores the theme of community and the individual. Von Berg gives his Aryan certificate to a Jewish man, saving him through a kind of nationalistic self-sacrifice.

The Inquest, is a 1970 Donald Freed documentary drama about the trial of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg. This is thin line between reporting a case or overdramatizing it.

It's Morning, 1939, Shirley Graham. Like many other African-American dramatists, Graham used the theater to counter White versions of history, to tell the Black woman's story from her own perspective. In this play she cuts through the usually-sentimentalized views of "the peculiar institution" and to look at a system which denied slave women even the ability to protect their own children. Indeed, it is a very shocking subject here--a mother who must make the terrible choice between killing her child and seeing her brought up in slavery (looking far ahead to Toni Morrison's novel Beloved). This is a focus on what slavery does to women. Mother Cissie hears her daughter Millie is about to be sold to a trader, and decides to kill her, and the title becomes a bitter pun on "mourning," and the parallel is strong between the sacrifice of Millie and Christ's sacrifice.

Jar the Floor, 1994, Cheryl West, a loving and lunatic Valentine of four women in an African-American family. As the women gather together one afternoon for a birthday party, dreams collide, and old scars are uncovered. This play focuses on the contemporary issues in African-American, women's and human lives. A touching and funny play.

Journey's End, an English 1928 antiwar play by R.C. Sheriff very different from What price Glory? This look at the British trenches in 1918 Quentin, France, is more atmospheric than documentary-like, but is a wonderful contrast to the American celebration of furlough and male bonding. Journey's End thinks hero worship is acceptable only if kept within strict bounds.

Juno and the Paycock, a 1924 play by Sean O'Casey is a fine look at the true Ireland, the city and the country with a deep political commitment. He is most faithful to working class tragedies, and in Juno, the central couple is explored with the death of their son (for betraying an IRA comrade) and their unmarried daughter pregnant. But unlike John Millington Synge, O'Casey is interested in depicting their struggles in a naturalistic way, their war against a sterile, repressive Church, and a murderous colonial state. His plays are sad, his heroes often cowardly, but he persuades that Irish life is worth the struggle

Juristen, (Judges), a 1980 work by Rolf Hochhuth put him back in the international headlines with this documentary drama, a far more opinionated work than his The Deputy. This play is strictly fiction, based on historical events. Why, asks Hochhuth, were the judges of Hitler's courts allowed to sit on the bench in a supposedly de-Nazified Germany? He uses techniques from tabloids like "Hard Copy" showing the actors in a film footage designed to look like historical personages. This became even more timely when Hochhuth revealed a current political candidate as having been one of the lingering judges. The man lost his libel case, his post, and his political hopes.

Justice, a social problem tragedy in 1910 by John Galsworthy, wherein he tells the story of a London law clerk who steals to help an abused wife. Tried fairly, the clerk is sent to prison and, in the brutal realities of punishment, is destroyed. At the time time three months solitary confinement was a routine initiation for all prisoners, regardless of crime or character, and the scene in which the helpless protagonist is thrust into his black cage so impressed the public that reform measures in England were immediately instituted.

Keely and Du, 1993, Jane Martin, is an explosive "what if" story compelling in its sense of urgency. The harrowing encounter between a radical right-to-life activist and a pregnant rape victim transforms them both and puts a human face on this timely subject. Bound to stir discussion.

Kennedy's Children, is a 1973 set of monologues by Robert Patrick. Five characters in an American bar, each oblivious to the other's presence, take turns delivering the monologues, intercut and interspersed. These are John F Kennedy's children: a Vietnamese veteran, a Marilyn Monroe cutout, a wry, gay off-Broadway actor,, a professional leftist, and an aging social worker deeply committed to Kennedy and the cult of the assassination. The voices of missed chances, wasted opportunism, and betrayed dedication thus commingle and fade away

The Lark, a 1953 Jean Anouilh treatment of Joan of Arc, in an interesting contrast to Shaw's St. Joan. Anouilh's lark is a dear child rather than a warrior, wistful, and not as revolutionary.

Letters to a Student Revolutionary, 1991, by Elizabeth Wong, is the first western play about the tragedy of the Tiananmen Square Rebellion in 1989 China. The play tracks two young women, in their early 20s, one in America and one in China. The two girls, Bibi and Karen, are embodiments of their letters to each other over the course of several years. The play follows how the pen pals learn of each other's cultures, and how Karen is involved with the uprising at Tiananmen Square. This is war and world events as seen through the eyes of two young women infused with idealism for the world and for progress. The letters provide a direct, intimate look into their thoughts about these events.

The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby, is the 1980 epic adaptation of the Dickens classic. It has a fabulous moral outrage and an authenticity to the Dickensian righteousness, with wonderful impressionistic scenes like the London poor staring at the gorging rich, the sounds of Portsmouth harbor, and the picaresque life of country England. Dickens was a life-long theater lover, and there is a rich spoof of a traveling troupe performing Romeo and Juliet.

Live Like Pigs by John Arden, 1958, is a Brechtian and naturalistic take on the clash between two classes of English domestic life, the sedately lower-middle class Jacksons and the virtually barbaric Sawneys, thrust among the Jacksons in a state housing project. The show is lively and funny--but what side is Arden on?
Progressives resented the Sawney's lawlessness; was Arden defaming the welfare state? Conservatives resented the Jackson's airs and hypocrisy; was Arden defaming the respectable citizenry? He takes neither side, but rather is on the side of life.

The Lowells...Talk Only to God, 1934, Ruth Morris exposes the plight of women and children working in the Lowell, Massachusetts, mills in degrading and dangerous conditions. The play-- which focuses on how abusive husbands claim their wives' wages and how immigrant women in particular are exploited by employers--is set in the mid-nineteenth century, the depression of 1848 is only a stand-in for the Great Depression of the 1930s.

The Madwoman of Chaillot, 1945, by Jean Giraudoux, blends whimsy and lyricism in a plot to destroy the world's profiteers and scavengers. Giraudoux is probably referring to the agents of Paris' thriving black market, or to the occupying German army, which treated Vichy France like its feudal playground.This world is filled with madwomen and other bizarre characters, but they are serious about getting rid of the bad guys, driving them through a tunnel into a pit of no return. Europe in the Spring of 1945? The eponymous countess says, "The world is saved...There is nothing so wrong in the world that a reasonable woman cannot correct in the course of a day." He has great people and great topics.

Mandragola, 1524, by Niccolo Machiavelli, is a witty turn on some of the same issues he raised in The Prince and the Discourses. In those books Machiavelli candidly set forth his conception of how humankind acts in an essentially immoral society. Here you have desire, adultery, lust, deception, and the prospect of wealth. The mother, Sostrata, entertains no qualms about her daughter's lack of virtue: she believes the ends justify the means. Christian society is ruthlessly satirized, because traditional concepts of love, marriage, chastity, and order are irrelevant in Machiavelli's "real world." The title is an ironic comment on the mandrake root, supposedly full of magical powers, and Machiavelli skewers human superstition and idealism in the work. The play is both an exposure of sixteenth century corruption and folly and a timeless satire of human gullibility.

Ma Rainey's Black Bottom, 1984, August Wilson sets this play in 1927 Chicago to examine the problems of Black musicians during that exciting period known as the "Jazz Age, " and the "Harlem Renaissance." Wilson constructs the play to reflect what he calls, "the sob of the Jazz Band," with all its braggadocio and poignancy.

Mariano Faliero, Doge of Venice, is a prototypical Romantic drama by Lord Byron in 1820. It is an interesting look at how Romantics obsessed over historical splendor and fondly recalled the calm of earlier

eras. The story is indeed drawn from history: the 14th century Doge, leader of Venice, Marino Faliero, turned against his fellow nobles to lead a popular conspiracy and was beheaded for treason. The hero's last speech, at the chopping block, is a fabulous piece of long winded purple prose which is intended to be a "Great Moment" of history. Good example of over-theatricality.

The Marriage of Figaro, text by Beaumarchais in the 1780s, is one of the most politically defiant plays written during the eras when the Western stage suffered censorship. But the gap between the writing of the play (1781) and its premiere (1784), in fact lay in a royal ban. The eponymous protagonist is a rebellious servant, out to deceive his master.

Mary Stuart, an 1800 work by Friedrich Schiller, is an excellent piece to compare the changes in writing about historical figures. Schiller is the prototype of the "Sturm und Drang" Romantic author, and he takes liberties with his subjects and romanticizes their predicaments. In this play, the monarch in power, Britain's Elizabeth I, is the one Schiller fears, and the monarch stripped of power, Mary, Queen of Scots, is his heroine. Schiller's Mary is poetic and admirable whereas his Elizabeth is neurotic and tyrannical. Of course Schiller must bring the the rivals together for an emotional confrontational scene, even though history reflects that they never met. No matter, it is still good historical theater, and a good base from which to leap and analyze these monarchs. In many respects, Mary Stuart is a part of women's liberation literature before the fact. While Mary enjoys the passive role tradition has assigned her gender, Elizabeth decries the double standard, outraged that her subjects see her as woman and not as a Monarch.

Mary the 3rd is by Rachel Crothers in 1923, one of the lost voices of the inter-war generation. Crothers dealt with social problems of the middle class--generational gap, weak vocational motivation, repressive manners, and especially women's rights. Sometimes she pulls back for a happy ending. This play maintains its bite suggesting that women's encompassing love of men and marriage oppresses her as much as legal prejudice and the double standard does.

"Master Harold"...and the Boys, 1982, Athol Fugard, is a n honest and clear piece on race relations in South Africa. Fugard calls his work "theater of defiance," as he weaves a study in human relationships--a young white man and two black servants. Probing this "bond between brothers," of two races in a racialist state, Fugard reaches a climax in which one of the servants responds to the master's racist joke by showing his ass. Immediately contrite, the servants touches the boy's shoulder...and the boy turns and spits in his face. It is an arresting moment, all the more when you consider the play's autobiographical nature. Fugard's given name is, in fact, Harold.

The Meeting, the 1989 play by Jeff Stetson, is a fictional account of a meeting between Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X. Stetson imagines the exchange that would have taken place if the two had met at the height of the civil rights movement to discuss their divergent approaches, and perhaps, to reconcile their differences.

Memorial, 1983-1994, by Charles LaBorde, is play by a Charlotte, NC drama teacher set at the dedication of the Vietnam Memorial in Washington. The storyline focuses on war veterans, their parents and friends reliving their Vietnam-era experiences through flashbacks.

Mrs. Warren's Profession, an 1893 George Bernard Shaw, shocked the London public when this play inquiring about the plight of women in the workplace opened. The nineteenth century, which regarded the economically independent woman as suspect, went on the general assumption that women worked in stores, restaurants, etc. to augment a family income, and used this as an excuse for underpaying women. but what if the woman had no family? At the time a common dock worker earned 6 pence an hour where a woman earned 1 penny. Critics slammed Shaw for not creating a tragic heroine--Shaw countered he desired to write a play which "seared the conscience." Critics wanted Mrs. Warren, the erring woman, to lament her sad situation, return to her separated family, and die in the end. In a generation when we have scrutinized the marketplace for the very same kinds of inequities, such a play remains very timely.

Mother Courage, a 1941 Bertholt Brecht chronicle, is known for its depiction of the devourment of people during war. The title is meant to be ironic--Brecht insisted that the protagonist is a leech, a capitalist, a war profiteer. "She is not sympathetic," he decreed. Brecht's program is to alienate us from these feelings of seeing her as a survivor, but e inevitably find more in the play than the Marxist cartoon we are supposed to appreciate. We find an illustration of the devastations of war, bitter, humanistic, and yes, even heroic.

The Mother of Us All, 1946, by Gertrude Stein, is an ode to the power of women, and how unsung her contributions have been in American history. Stein focuses on Susan B. Anthony, and her struggles for women's suffrage, but assembles a cast of characters that cover about 150 years to discuss the essence of American history and revolutionary spirit. But the beauty of the play is that Stein, through Anthony challenges what we know, how we know it, and how knowledge is made and conveyed. Stein demands that we consider our notions of history, and that our notions of what constitutes "history" are filtered through male cultural assumptions. Her writings force us to confront our notions and conventions of knowledge and history.

Mystery Bouffe, is a "Communist Miracle" play from 1918 by Vladimir Mayakovsky. This is the first play officially sanctioned by the still very-new Bolshevik government--it is part medieval fantasy, and antic comedy (buffa) proclaiming the new age of Revolution. The scene moves from the North Pole to heaven to hell, and the cast includes David Lloyd George, Tolstoy, Clemenceau, the devil, Methuselah, and a chorus of machines who once oppressed the world's workers but who will now help them to build their great universal commune.

Narrow Road to the Deep North, 1968, by Edward Bond, is another controversial play from perhaps the most controversial of all postwar English playwrights. His leftism and graphic violence is similar to Quentin Tarentino's Pulp Fiction. This play explores 19th century Japanese history in a Brechtian style of the "Epic Theater." Bond inevitably brings Justice into his works, and raises the question, "What ought we to do? Live Justly. But what is Justice?"

No Exit, 1944, by Jean-Paul Sartre. First produced in 1944 during the German Occupation of France, No Exit, is a philosophical inquiry into man's responsibility in he modern world. As a philosopher-poet, Sartre is interested in man's recognition of the consequence of his acts and his affirmation of existence through conscious choice of action. The characters, situations, and events are vehicles for Sartre's philosophy. Inez, Estelle, and Garcin are modern archetypes rather than individuals. Garcin remarks that "Hell is--other people," and acknowledges that he lives in a world of people, and that he must assume responsibility. Hell is not depicted in a Christian sense--rather Hell is an earthly existence and the real source of humankind's damnation and torment is their abdication of responsibility in a moral world. And there is "No Exit," from life or hell, or from the necessity for moral action.

On Whitman Avenue, 1946, by Maxine Wood, shows what happen when a young white woman, Toni, rents an apartment in her house to the family of a disabled Black war hero. The focus is on Toni's family and how they alienate her for doing this deed, and how it devastates the Black family. The play is designed to show how racism destroys White families as well as Black. (It is thought that this play influenced Lorraine Hansberry who wrote A Raisin in the Sun.

Our Country's Good, 1992, by Timberlake Wertenbaker, is a poetic and haunting look at the effects of colonialism and the penal system in 18th century Australia. The English lords bring convicts, and one of the captains advocates the use of theater to keep the convicts in line, and provide an outlet for their frustrations. The loneliness of the officers, the humanity of the natives, the merits of theater, capital punishment and the nature of dreams commingle in this play for an interesting philosophical and historical discussion. The title refers to the executions which are perpetrated for "our country's good."

Our Lan', 1941, by Theodore Ward, is the story of a group of newly freed blacks. Trusting in the government's promise of "Forty Acres and a Mule," for each freedman, they struggle to build a new life for themselves off the coast of Georgia.

Our Town, 1938, Thornton Wilder's despair to convince the public that life is to be savored, all of it, each moment, came in the middle of the Great Depression, and is a wonderful companion to teaching the 1930s. The play is experimental in form, but interestingly conservative in its outlook--indeed, the left attacked Our Town for its seemingly complacent view of American bourgeois life. And while its hugeness depresses many spectators, or dwarfs their self-esteem (Our Town=Our World), it is also a sweet epic look at the beauty and simplicity which we ought to appreciate, even in, or especially in a Depression of epic proportions. The most notable moment comes when Emily invisibly revisits her youth after dying in childbirth, and she draws back in agony at the failure of the living to appreciate the act of life. Interesting to use in a history class and not just a literature class.

The Promise , 1965, by Alexei Arbuzov is a look at the relationship of three people in Leningrad, from the Nazi siege to the post-Stalinist cultural relaxation. Tanya is a slightly feminist, lighter complement to Ibsen's A Doll's House.

A Raisin in the Sun, 1959, by Lorraine Hansberry. This landmark drama about the Younger family is the quintessential, microcosmic African-American family which Jacob Lawrence paints in his Migration Series: full of hopes and dreams of getting the sharecropper life their family has endured for generations. This play is full of the perceptions of the conscious, constant struggles black families have had in America. Although the play is full of 1959 dreams, how timeless is the work?

Rain from Heaven, is a 1934 politicized comedy of manners by S.N. Behrman. He tries to mesh Noel Coward with the headlines by setting at an English country house a confrontation of German and American fascists and a refugee from Hitler.

Rhinoceros, a 1959 cautionary tale from Eugene Ionesco, is about a French town with rhinoceroses rampaging through the streets. Where did they come from? It appears that the population is undergoing a metamorphosis--as they do, perhaps, when Fascists take over, or the Communists, or the Buddhists, or whoever's next to seize power. Finally, only one couple is left and he turns to his girlfriend Daisy and says:

> Berenger: Listen, Daisy, there's something we can do. We'll have children, our children will have children. It will take time, but it's up to us to regenerate humanity.
> Daisy: Regenerate humanity?
> Berenger: It's been done before.
> Daisy: Long ago. Adam and Eve...They must have been courageous.

This is both a fantasy and a description of life in France under the German occupation. A parable, and maybe a prediction.

Romulus the Great, by Swiss Friedrich Durrenmatt in 1949, finds the last of the Roman Emperors merrily presiding over the fall of the empire as he awaits the dreaded barbarians. But as the Teutonic Conquerors arrive, they do not drive him away, but pension him off. This play is a witty play, with a theme and shades of the universal in parables: the last emperor, the first barbarian, the changing of epochs. Durrenmatt is known for many of the post World War II topics--communal guilt and menacing technology, and what is more frightening, is how relevant his messages remain.

The Rope Dancers, a 1957 Morton Wishengrad tragedy concerns a broken Irish family. Set in a New York City tenement apartment at the turn of the century, with angry, disillusioned, helpless, wistful characters, and very naturalistic and yet poetic dialogue.

R.U.R. is a 1921 fantasy melodrama by Karel Capek, aczech playwright. In this work Capek coins the word robot, in his harrowing look at a future rebellion by the world's robots. His robots are are feelingless brutes created to slave for humanity, but they turn into the world's masters. But the robots cannot reproduce--- until a doctor discovers a a male and female robot couple who have somehow developed the ability to love. He sends them forth into the world as the Second Adam and Eve. The titular initials stand for Rossum's Universal Robots, the firm whose technological perfection of the android leads nearly to the

end of the world. This play is similar to the 1920s movie masterpiece, Metropolis.

R.Y., Maxim Gorky, 1924. The figure of Maxim Gorky is worthy of study. Alyeksei Maksimovich Pyeshkov adopted the pen name "Gorky" ("bitter") in an outrage at the inequality of life in Tsarist Russia. Today his name graces public squares, towns, and he is revered. But working before and after the 1917 Revolution, Gorky seems to have been spared the usual routing by authoritarian rulers. The bulk of Gorky's plays follow up on social critiques indicting the materialism of the intelligentsia and intolerance of worker's grievances. Gorky's death does have the familiar, mysterious ring which is like so so many others in Stalinist USSR however. Another person worthy of study is Vsyevolod Meyerhold, a man committed to the political theater of the Bolshevik Party, embraced theater as the vehicle through which the principles could be achieved. The play R.Y. is a 1924 look at failed a attempt by western capitalists to defeat the Revolution. (The title refers to the Westerner's subversive syndicate, known as *Razrusheniya Yevropi*, "For the Destruction of Europe." But socialist realistic plays were the only ones the Party tolerated, and later, when Meyerhold tried to work in other experimental theaters, he was guilty of pursuing independent art in an autocratic state. Eventually, Meyerhold vanished, and assumed tortured and executed.

Salvation Nell, a 1908 soap opera by Edward Sheldon. The play concerns a scrub woman who abandons her criminal boyfriend for life in the Salvation Army, willing to take him back as soon as he has reformed his ways. The play is notable for its wretched depiction of the slums. The play with its teeming people, despair of life in costumes and dialogue, influenced a generation of playwrights like Elmer Rice.

School, is an 1869 T.W. Robertson play known for being the epitome of the "cup-and-saucer drama," plays known for their bourgeois naturalism and promoted a liberal examination of society's received notions, bold for Robertson's day. For instance, hearing one Lord Beaufoy prattle on about the preposterousness of women's suffrage, the Robertson spokesman says:

> I agree with you there. If women were admitted to electoral privileges, they'd sell them for the price of a new chignon. Man,as the nobler animal, has the exclusive right to sell his vote for beer.

The School for Scandal, 1777, by Richard Brindsley Sheridan, is perhaps, the quintessential comedy of manners. The play is comical, yes, but almost terrifying, honestly comical too. Hypocrisy and malice are exposed, but Sheridan warns that we must always be on the look-out for these villains. Sheridan's use of "appropriate nomenclature" is well-used--the hypocrite is Joseph Surface, his chief gossip is Lady Sneerwell, her confidante is Snake, and the bantering young country wife is Lady Teazle. Sheridan's play is illustrative of "corrective laughter" that begins in Greek comedy. A play that is undying in its timeliness

Showboat, 1927, book by Oscar Hammerstein II from Edna Ferber, is an unexpurgated look at race relations in late nineteenth century America, laws of miscegenation, and other social history themes like the dispersal of families. The current revival book has the historical punch of the original, and does not whitewash or shrink from showing the searing prejudices as Ferber intended. Director Harold prince has said of his revival, "I was committed to eliminate any inadvertent stereotype or dialogue...However I was determined not to re-write history. The fact that during the 45-year period depicted in our musical there were lynchings, imprisonment and forced labor of blacks in the US is irrefutable....[Indeed] The creators of Show Boat...took fierce aim at prejudice in our society."

Six Characters in search of An Author, the 1921 work by Luigi Pirandello, is the classic modern "searching" play--in fact he lends his name to an adjective--Pirandellian--an inquiry into where we can place the border between art and life, or between objective truth and perception. These are games of identity. A family of six bursts into a play rehearsal and demand that their story be enacted, and they apparently not only re-enact their tale, but they re-undergo it. Or do they? It is a moody, expressionistic piece.

The Slave, a 1964 play by Amiri Baraka, is a result of the explosive 1960s and its willing reflection in the theater world. Most of Baraka's plays reveal the failure of American race relations. Some of the plays are belligerently separatist, but this play is a gloat of a black victory in a race war of the future.

A Soldier's Story, 1981, by Charles Fuller, is the second play by an African American to have won the Pulitzer Prize. On one level, it is a murder mystery placed in the context of the racism of the United States Army during World War II. But, on a deeper, less sensational level, it raises questions about the images of African Americans in a predominantly white society and about the rights of African Americans to determine how other African Americans should conduct themselves. In this light, the play transcends its World War II setting and becomes a timeless play.

Sticks and Bones, a 1976 play by David Rabe, probes the effects of the Vietnam War on various people. This play deals most effectively with a blinded veterans homecoming.

The Tenth Man, 1960, by Paddy Chayefsky, is a play which reveals much about the Hasidic Jewish community. In the simplest terms, the play is about the exorcism of a *dybbuk*, a soul of a dead person inhabiting the body of a living person, and directing his/her conduct. In the play, a dybbuk has apparently entered the body of a lovely young woman. She suffers from schizophrenia and her fathers wants to have her committed to a hospital. The grandfather believes that she does not suffer from mental illness, but instead is possessed of a dybbuk. To exorcise the dybbuk, a religious ceremony must be performed according to ancient tradition. To conduct a religious ceremony in Judaism, a quorum, or *minyan* of ten males is needed--it is upon the finding of the tenth man that the play turns. The play has a sense of some fantasy and love story to it, but there are also great dialogic exchanges between the Jews which enlighten non-jewish readers as they discuss anarchism, communism, materialism and God. From these older men we get the sense that Judaism is not just a religion but a way of life.

There Shall Be No Night, 1940 by Robert E. Sherwood, is a look at Finland under attack, barely a year after the Soviets had overrun the same country.

Translations, a 1981 play by Brian Friel, looks at nineteenth-century British attempts to extirpate the Gaelic language in Ireland. It looks into a community called Baile Beag in Irish and now Ballybeg in England. The Royal Engineers are in the village to re-map the area in English, giving villagers a first-hand look at the imperialists and triggering political tension. The play sympathetically looks at an area soon to be decimated by famine and emigration, and what happens to a country whose culture is forcibly being dissolved?

Travesties, 1974, by Tom Stoppard, is an unusual anti-absurdist absurdist farce about the Russian Revolution. It is about art versus politics and involves the writer James Joyce, Dada artist Tristan Tzara, and Lenin, and he spoofs Shakespeare, Oscar Wilde, sonnets, art, anti-art, and typical European xenophobia. One has to know the movements of these personages, or one can learn them doing the play, but it is wickedly witty.

Triple-A Plowed Under, 1936, Elmer Rice. During the first term of FDR's presidency, the WPA mandated several agencies for government-sponsored employment of the arts. The Federal Theater emerged to support every kind of theater imaginable (much like the Roman "Bread and Circus" idea). They also sponsored many new plays, a kind of theater very political and daring for the times. The bulk of the controversial theater seemed to be headed by Elmer Rice, and he developed a unique spectacle, the "Living Newspaper." This is sort of a pre-MTV look at timely documentaries with flash forms, pageantry, film clips, loudspeaker harangues, bizarre lighting effects, crowd agitprop scenes, choral monologues--all to enhance the news of the day. This play deals with a Marxist view of the agricultural problems of the 1930s. Conservative congressmen resented federal subsidies to the arts, and ranted against the Federal Theater leftist bias. Is this from the 1930s or the 1990s??

Trouble in Mind, 1955, Alice Childress, This play examines a group of actors as they rehearse a drama about African-American life written by a White dramatist. Using a play-within-a-play structure, Trouble takes a direct look at the American theater and the racism that exists in the works of even supposedly liberal White writers. Trouble's protagonist, Wiletta Mayer, refuses to be co-opted into enacting still one more stage falsification of the Black woman's life. This play is a great look that theater not only reflects society, but can be a medium for social critique and a valid subject of scrutiny.

Uncle Tom's Cabin, 1852, George Aiken's melodrama of the century might seem an unlikely, or offensive choice, but since this production traveled the country for decades and ranks as the greatest theatrical attraction in American history, it bears some study. The writing standards are dreadful and the sentiment, cheap piety, absolute villainy, and spectacle ooze from this work, but people who normally shunned the theater as a house of sin, flocked to this play. The play introduced such conventions about Blacks as the "tragic Mulatto," the "Devoted Christian Slave," and "The Carefree Primitive," which affected dramatists for a century in their depictions of Blacks. What made this such a mainstay? How might this work have shaped race relations positively or negatively? What is the effect of such a play on culture?

The Visit, 1956, Friedrich Durrenmatt. Protagonist: the richest woman in the world. Problem: she offers an unspeakable fortune to her penniless hometown if it kills the man who seduced and abandoned her years before. Conflict: the town's conscience versus the woman's money. Another example of the German-Swiss drama of the 1950s and the exploration of communal guilt and existentialism.

Waiting for Godot, the 1953 play by Samuel Beckett, chronicles tramps doing vaudeville while waiting for nothing to happen has become the emblematic work of the postwar Western theater. It is an effective presentation of his world of confinement, stasis, babble and fear.

Waiting for Lefty , a fabulous "agitprop" and easily the greatest dramatic moment in American Depression theater where the theater becomes a union meeting hall, the audience turns into union members, and the actors assume the job of activists exhorting their fellow members to strike for higher wages, and a clean union.

Wetback Run, 1961, Theodore Apstein, provides insight into the motivations that lead Mexican workers to leave their homes and families behind and run the risk of being caught in their illegal attempts to enter the United States in search of a better living.

We Won't Pay! We Won't Pay!, 1974, by Dario Fo , is from Italy's jester from the left, gadfly and baiter of the forces of reaction and compromise. This is his most popular play, and is a comic agitprop inviting the audience to fight inflation by stealing necessities.

What Price Glory , by Maxwell Anderson, a daring 1924 look at the romance of male bonding and the cynicism of male aggression. Its earthy diction became a "cause celebre" in its day, and attempted to censor the play, but popular resistance to censorship and support of the play turned opinion around. It is a play about World War I, but not of battle or life in the trenches, but of American marines relaxing, joking, and swearing during a peaceful interlude in France.

What Use Are Flowers?, 1961, by Lorraine Hansberry, is her words, "a bit of a fantasy thing about war and peace." It is about a hermit who returns from a self-imposed exile to find wild children orphaned by a nuclear holocaust. As he decides to civilize the children and chooses those aspects of civilization worthy of repeating and necessary to their spiritual and intellectual growth, the audience gains a fascinating insight into the priorities of western culture.

Widower's Houses, an 1892 play by George Bernard Shaw, comes from his "angry young man" period of ruthless exposes of social plague spots. The play focuses on middle-class exploitation of the poor in slums and factories. But unlike works by Zola and Gorki, Shaw shows the middle-class not the slum-dwellers. He shows how the middle-class, while purporting to hold the misery of the poor in horror, in fact condones and even profits from them. Harry Trench, the hero, is a young aristocratic man raised with the notion of *noblesse oblige*, and who is genuinely shocked when he learns that the wealth of his his prospective father-in-law comes from neglected and decaying slum properties. Widower's Houses is Marxist in its condemnation of the morality of such Victorian bourgeois sacred cows as private property and the hearth. This play echoes Jonathan Swift's A Modest Proposal, with his "rational proposal": since the suffering of the poor is inevitable, let us feed off of them as efficiently as we can.

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You Can't Take It With You, 1936, by George S. Kaufman and Moss Hart, would be an interesting companion piece to Our Town, another product of the Great Depression. This screwball farce is the ultimate in escapism, and is that American idyll of "having a good time." There is mayhem, but also a great deal of cynicism and a wilting "joie de vivre" in the face of reality. An excellent choice along with a Shirley Temple movie to show the cultural products during the 1930s.

Zalman, or the Madness of God, adapted in 1985 for the stage from an Elie Wiesel story. This play illuminates not only the plight of Soviet Jewry, but the anguish of individuals everywhere who must survive, and yet long for something more than mere survival.

Zooman, 1985, by Charles Fuller, is a searing look at a search for justice in a Brooklyn neighborhood when a father of a slain girl appeals to the media when witnesses won't come forward. A wonderful look at problems within the African community coming to grips with the problems of the "community."

Questions and Thoughts about multicultural plays of Americans:

The Tenth Man

U.S. History woefully lacks a strong explanation of the contribution Jewish groups and people have made to the United States. The first Jews arrived in 1654 to New Amsterdam, fleeing from the Portuguese Inquisition in Brazil. But Jews had difficult times in many colonies, and besides New York and Rhode Island, were often not welcome. By the time of 1776, there were probably only about 2500 in the New World. But Jews eagerly fought in the Revolution, and many made substantial loans and contributions to finance the Revolution. After the conservative crackdown across Europe in 1848 several hundred thousand Jews emigrated to the U.S., many of them sine craftsmen. The big wave of Jewish immigration began in 1880, however, when the Russian tsars cracked down on pogroms, and millions fled the persecutions. To assist the flood of immigration, a group of older immigrants founded the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society in 1881. To stem the tide of anti-semitism in the U.S. German Jews founded the B'nai B'rith (Sons of the Covenant) in the 1840s. These organizations helped immigrants ease into their new lives in the New World. But for many assimilation posed the threat of old traditions and beliefs becoming extinct. Part of that experience and fear is expressed in The Tenth Man. For classes not oriented to Judaism, it may be helpful to read portions of Martin Buber's book, The Origin and Meaning of Hasidim, which lucidly explains the tenets of hasidim.

1. How is The Tenth Man relevant for our times? Are many young people possessed of a dybbuk of lack of faith in living?
2. How does Chayefsky manage to characterize each of the ten men of the minyan?
3. How would your family fit into/or react to the struggles of the play?

Day Of Absence

This play has a wicked sting, and even the stage directions have a bite. This play, intended for a an all-black cast, involves a day in a steamy, Southern town when it seems all of the blacks have disappeared. The play is done with the all-black cast in white-face and blonde wigs, reversing the tradition of the Minstrel show when white performers appeared in black-face. The play is expressionistic, meaning anti-realistic, (see the elements under the play The Adding Machine) and the characters are all archetypes for the kind of people Douglas Turner Ward means to satirize (the Club Woman is the wealthy snob, Mr. Council Clan, etc.). Ward is angry man, sarcastically surveying the exploitation of blacks by whites. His acid wit comes through in every line as he exposes the bigotry and selfishness he encountered fro white people. After reading the play, consider the following questions:

1. Admittedly, Day of Absence is a one-sided presentation. Would it be equally effective if both sides were presented?
2. What is the significance of the end of the play with Clem and Luke?
3. Compare this expressionistic play about race, to an expressionistic play about class, like the Adding Machine, for differences and similarities.
4. Ward wrote this play in 1966. How much have times changed, and what has stayed the same in nearly thirty years?

Wetback Run

Theodore Apstein, born in Kiev, Russia, moved to Mexico at an early age. His experience there developed his sympathy and compassion for the Mexicans so evident in this play. Jacinto Sandoval is a hard worker who cannot farm his land profitably and hopes to improve his lot by crossing over into the United States and securing employment. As he crosses over the International Bridge, he is told to return

to Mexico, and advised to return next summer. This play deals with eventual crossing, lying, legal problems, and how other Mexicans will eagerly expose illegal aliens if it may help them. We see demonstrated in the play the hostility that is shown by older Mexican-Americans who resent the presence of "the wetbacks" because they will work for lower wages and thus cause unemployment for the older workers. Whereas some groups represent a a triumph in the blending of an ethnic culture to America, Wetback Run depicts a failure in one sense, but we also see a triumph of spirit in the end.

1. How could this play be compared to The Crucible by Arthur Miller?
2. Discuss the immorality of committing illegal acts in order to provide for one's family. Are people justified at any time to ignore the law because of economic difficulties?
3. How does this play coincide with the treatment other immigrant received upon arrival in the United States? Are such fears about immigrants still present today?
4. How might a Mexican-American have handled the story differently?

As you think about the plays, ponder how different groups react to the process of life in the United States. How similar or different is the experience of the Jew, or the Irish, or the Italian, the Black, or the Puerto Rican? What is the process of assimilation or acculturation to the American culture? Should it be a conscious fight? or an unconscious accommodation? Americans frequently speak about diversity, but how do these plays illuminate the positive and negative aspects by which American culture is enriched with multi-cultures?

The history of the theater in America could also be used to highlight and understand the developments in women's history and African-American movements.
It had become commonplace that once women got the right to vote, they had gotten all the rights they needed. Although a handful of women had plays produced, the American theater remained a man's domain just as it had been since its inception. Indeed, critic Joseph Mersand wrote an article in 1937 entitled, "When Women Write Plays," and spoke disparagingly about a woman's ability to "muster up the high notes of drama." Four years later, another critic, George Jean Nathan, wrote an article called, "Playwrights in Petticoats," in which he belittled women playwrights. "Even the very best women playwrights [meaning Lillian Hellman] fall measurably short of the mark of our best masculine." But in spite of such widespread prejudice, women made inroads. In the 1930s playwright Hallie Flanagan left an indelible mark as head of the Federal Theater Project, a subsidiary of the Works Projects Administration. Flanagan oversaw some 15,000 employees and the production of some 900 works. Eventually Congress killed the Theater Project when many conservative Congressmen complained of the liberal bent in the plays. As a project in women's history, students could choose a year in theater history and study the plays for content, playwright, and representation.

Likewise the depiction of Blacks in American theater lends itself to a new understanding of the struggles and developments of Blacks. As early as 1769, in The Padlock, a white dramatist wrote a role for a Black actor. But it would be decades before the regular employment of blacks in dramatic circles would become an institution. Indeed, American Ira Aldridge, a celebrated actor, moved to Europe to pursue an acting career. From the 1820s through the 1850s there was an "African Theater" in New York catering to free black audiences. A handful of dramas by black playwrights got produced in this time period. Not until 1889, in a production of Uncle Tom's Cabin, did it become commonplace to hire a black actor. While it is important to note the discriminatory habits of theatrical producers, it is even more important to remember that for decades, white audiences saw no real black people on stage; they saw only the melodramatic, or mocking images as played by white actors in blackface. Meanwhile, it became a general conception that blacks lacked artistic talent. It would be useful to trace the development of twentieth century drama and see how and where Black dramatists fit in (from Angeline Grimke's landmark 1916 Rachel to Alice Childress and Lorraine Hansberry in the 1950s, to the angry playwrights like Douglas Turner Ward and Amiri Baraka (aka LeRoi Jones and his Dutchman) to Pulitzer-prize winning dramatists Charles Gordone, Charles Fuller, and August Wilson). In the 1960s critics black playwright of a "revolutionary theater," to which he replied, " I prefer to call it the theater of reality."

A NIGHT AT THE THEATER
IN 1876

The following account of an evening visit to the old Bowery Theater in 1876 appeared in Charles H. Haswell's book Reminiscences of an Octogenarian of the City of New York *published in 1896.*

We were witnessing a version of the stock Irish play in which a virtuous peasant girl and a high-minded patriot with a brogue, knee breeches, and an illegal whisky still utterly confound a number of lords, dukes, etc., assisted by a band of murderers ....

The house [theater] was a study more interesting than the stage. We idled about behind the seats of the balcony, with audible steps among thick-strewn peanut-shells. In the front lobby we met a man whom somebody [a pickpocket] had just "gone through," the check-taker and usher calmly comparing guesses concerning the offender .... Steadily sloping upward from the footlights was lifted, row above row, the close-packed, stamping, shrieking, cat-calling, true Bowery crowd. The house contained a good number of families, women, rough-clad but of decent looks, some mothers, and a few with children in arms, which the Bowery rules did not forbid. I saw but two gloved women in the audience [probably prostitutes]; they, by force of the attire, I suppose, felt a certain application of the saying, noblesse oblige, since they went out of their way to be agreeable to us.

Besides the prevailing peanuts, the spectators refreshed themselves with a great variety of nutrients. Ham sandwiches and sausage seemed to have precedence, but pork chops were also prominent, receiving the undivided attention of one large family in the second tier, the members of which consumed the chops with a noble persistence through all of the intermissions; holding the small end of the bone in the hand and working downward through the meaty portion. The denuded bones were then playfully shied at the heads of acquaintances in the pit [today's orchestra]. If you have never seen it done, you can hardly fancy how well you can telegraph with pork bones when the aim is true; and if you hit the wrong man, you have only to look innocent and unconscious.

The Bowery audience was by no means content with inarticulate noise; besides the time-honored modes of encouraging the players, there was full and free communication in speech with the actors — which the audience counted on and waited for with great expectancy. This the actors well understood and when an actor had a line of particularly overpowering moral import, his sure way to make a point with it was to come down front, exclaim it vociferously and end by saying, "Is that so, boys?" or "Don't you, boys?" and then the acclaim and outcry were so loud and long that all the babies in the house cried out, which caused another terrible din, with uncomplimentary remarks about the infants and "cheese it!" again a cry which, though a highly plastic expression, yet from the variety of its frequent application during the evening, must have come in sometimes with great irrelevance.

The second play was a burlesque of "Don Giovanni," with Leporello's part given to the clown, an amusing fellow and clever acrobat. The orchestra never ceased its swift, lilting measures and the action on the stage was allowed no resting place.

The cream of the play was thought to be in the banqueting scene, where the clown and an absurd old Irishwoman wrangled over a wash-bowl full of macaroni. The by-play of this scene is not to be here reported, though it pleased the audience greatly. Scarce any of the humor was more relished by most of the spectators than the exquisite device of throwing macaroni at the orchestra-players, and finally at the "pay people" in the pit. It cannot be pleasant to be swiped across the face with a string of wet macaroni, and probably those who were thus distinguished did not enjoy it, but the others did, and the upper tiers howled approbation like demons. □

The Bowery Theater in 1863